DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 121 361 JC 760 201

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TITLE One Example of the Educational Policy Making System of Pennsylvania.
PUB DATE 31 Mar 75
NOTE 24p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Program); Board of Education Policy; *College Credits; Community Colleges; Grades (Scholastic); *Higher Education; Junior Colleges; State Departments of Education; *State Standards; *Transfer Policy
IDENTIFIERS *Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

In 1973, the Pennsylvania Department of Education adopted a policy regarding articulation between the two-year community colleges and four-year state colleges, which recommended that preference for admission to state colleges be given to associate degree holders, and that a D grade obtained by two-year college students be treated by the senior institution in the same manner as D grades of its indigenous students. As of 1974, several four-year and two-year colleges refused to change their practice and accept D grades in transfer. On the basis of interviews with a representative sample of persons from at least eight organizations, groups, and offices involved in the process of approval, this document retraces the steps of how the policy was approved to help clarify the objections to it, and the approval procedure. Most objections to the policy were based on faculty's fear of losing quality within the institution if D grades were transferred. Other questions raised about the policy were why it was binding only on the 14 state-owned colleges, and not on the community colleges, and if the state has the power to set academic policy for the institution. Considering the ineffectiveness of the Department of Education in setting statewide policy, it is recommended that further articulation efforts be interinstitutional. (Author/NHM)

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ED121361

ONE EXAMPLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING SYSTEM OF PENNSYLVANIA

by

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DELAWARE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO ...VA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

MARCH 31, 1975

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper was an investigation of the recent articulation policy in Pennsylvania between four-year state colleges and two-year community colleges. The policy was approved by numerous groups representing these institutions and the Commissioner of Higher Education. Several four-year and two-year colleges refused to change their practice and accept D grades as the policy called for. The policy as it was approved was binding on the fourteen state-owned colleges but not on the community colleges. It appears there is little that the state currently could do to enforce a policy for community colleges to begin to accept D grades.

Most objections to the policy were based on faculty's fear of losing quality within the institution of D grades were transferred. This was true at both types of institutions. Several other questions raised about the policy were why only for community college students with associate degrees and who can set academic policy for the institution. There was some feeling that articulation should be between institutions rather than dictated by the state. The literature supported this view but indicated the need for a statewide "overseeing" body.

Some conclusions indicated that Pennsylvania does have an "unsystem" of higher education. There have been proposals and suggestions made regarding articulation and in fact a policy approved but little seems to have been done in following-up any of these. It appears articulation between institutions is the best suggestion considering the inability of the Department of Education to set statewide policy.

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Introduction

In 1975 the State Board of Education adopted a Bulletin Plan of Higher Education for the state of Pennsylvania. Bulletin Plan was the second such plan to record ways and methods the state of [illegible] Pennsylvania [illegible] Throughout the state. The plan did not specifically [illegible] articulation between the four year state colleges and of the two year community colleges. Consequently, two years later an articulation policy was approved for those institutions which [illegible] Plan, "There should be equal educational opportunities for all [illegible] citizens..... Through an interrelated system of all [illegible] supported institutions of higher education." (Appendix I)

This study was an attempt to follow through the articulation policy to uncover the approval steps and to ascertain the [illegible] of higher education in Pennsylvania. One step in the [illegible] stipulated that students with an associate degree from a community college should have the state colleges treat [illegible] as [illegible] for the two students. This point was viewed with [illegible] by many of the institutions even though the policy was approved by the presidents of both the community colleges and the four-[illegible] colleges. The approvals were all accomplished by June 30, 1975 and the Commissioner of Higher Education issued a policy [illegible] putting it into effect.

Statement of Purpose

As of September 1976 three state colleges did not [illegible] the

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

1. Why only for students completing the associate degree?

2. Why only community college transfers? Why not everyone?

3. Can anyone or any board set academic policy?

4. Why should state colleges be required to lower standards if other colleges receiving state support do not?

5. Do community colleges accept D grades for their transfer students?

Most of their concern was fear of losing quality in their institution. Even the West Chester State board member felt this was a real concern in accepting D grades.

Because of the questions raised above the president of the faculty senate asked the local board of trustees to reject this policy. The board did discuss it and voted to reject in the spring of 1974. On November 12, 1974 the President of West Chester received notification from the Assistant Attorney General of Pennsylvania that the board had overstepped its bounds and did not have the power to act on admissions policy. This authority was solely the responsibility of SCUD and the president of each institution. Then on December 4, 1974 the Commissioner of Higher Education indicated in a letter to the West Chester president that SCUD approval made the policy law and it must be implemented by the state colleges immediately. This is approximately fifteen months after SCUD had approved the policy. On December 30, 1974 a memo was sent from the vice-president of academic affairs to all deans to implement immediately. So the matter was given to the Undergraduate Council and Curriculum Committee to establish guidelines which they were doing

at the time of the submission of this proposal January 1975. Since that time the committee has approved guidelines for the college.

State system findings

Appendix II shows the offices of persons interviewed both in the Department of Education in Harrisburg and locally. The formal questions asked of those persons are shown in appendix III. In addition to the interviews, the other two state-owned colleges not adopting the policy and the other thirteen community colleges were surveyed to see if they were now transferring D grades. Only one of the four-year colleges is not transferring D grades but a committee is studying it. Six of the community colleges are not accepting D grades and have no plans to implement such a policy. The policy as it was approved was law only for the fourteen state-owned colleges. It appears to have been assumed by all that the community colleges would also adopt a policy to transfer D grades. The Associate Coordinator for the state-owned colleges felt that actually nothing would happen to a state college if they did not follow the policy because there is nothing the state could do short of withholding funds.

Responses to the formal questions showed agreement on just one question, as to how the policy originated and to the steps followed in approval. Because of their respective responsibilities their answers to the rest of the questions were more individual except for question seven. This question asked if they would suggest a different procedure for approving policies of this nature. There was little agreement as to how the state should respond to

articulation.

Suggestions were:

1. Two suggested keeping the current system leaving these matters to local authorities.

2. One suggested local control but legislation would be necessary to be able to do so.

3. One was inclined towards amenting law 484 which established community colleges and put something in it about articulation.

4. A statewide articulation committee for which a proposal was submitted in February 1973 but was turned down for various reasons by the members of the Department of Higher Education.

5. Regional planning such as the current Tri-state committee and the other regional planning councils should handle articulation.

6. The Pennsylvania Commonwealth University, a state system such as New York has, is another suggestion which is actively being discussed throughout the state.

Conclusions

Based on all the data above and on comments made during the interviews other than responses to the formal questions the following conclusions were reached:

1. Offices in Harrisburg tend to be guardians of the current system and to protect their constituent groups rather than working together for a common cause. One member of an office suggested that the various coordinators are ombudsmen for their respective types of institutions. The coordinators are staff positions while the Chief of two year programs is a line position.

2. The Tri-state committee appears to be a viable hardworking group but has no authority. One drawback of region-

alization expressed by a member of the committee was that in days of declining enrollments willingness to cooperate may also decline.

3. Almost all objections to accepting D grades came from faculty who are concerned about standards and quality. This was equally true at both four year and two year colleges.

4. Community college boards have considerably more power and authority than the boards at the state-owned colleges.

5. There is great concern about maintaining local autonomy and several persons felt things like articulation should be between individual colleges.

6. The State of Pennsylvania does have an "unsystem" as evidenced by its method of distributing money to institutions throughout the state. There is no board, committee or person with authority to set policy in higher education other than the state board of education which controls all public education in the state. The state board does have certain powers given to it by the legislature but in some cases has relegated this power to others e.g. local community college boards.

7. The community colleges operate autonomously in most areas such as tuition, programs, and sponsor. There is not, for example, a state policy which defines residency requirements for attending a community college.

8. The Master Plan calls for "equal educational opportunities" throughout the state but this is impossible if local authorities set tuition rates, establish programs and determine who can attend and who cannot attend.

9. People in Harrisburg were surprised to hear that several institutions still were not accepting D grades.

Recommendations

1. On the basis of several recommendations and in the absence of state direction it would appear wise for each community college to seek agreements with its neighboring institutions for which it is a feeder school on the subject of articulation. A "letter of intent" agreement such as Lehigh County Community College and Kutztown State College have for transfer students would be an avenue to pursue. This was suggested to the board member from West Chester State during the interview and he though it was an idea with merit.

2. The Articulation Model prepared by James Murphy should be followed-up. It was based on the investigation of several states including Florida's policy which is also recommended by Dr. Frederick Kintzer as a good example of a state articulation policy.

3. The Tri-state Committee on Articulation and Cooperation has made some sound suggestions. It needs wider publicity and communication to its members however.

4. Faculty at all institutions need to become educated by receiving factual data regarding the success of community college transfer students. Also information should be gathered regarding the reverse transfer student in Pennsylvania.

5. Senior institutions should focus more on a students current achievement at a community college (2.0 average and associate degree) rather than looking at his D grades.

6. The State of Pennsylvania's "nonsystem" of higher education needs to become more of a system with authority and responsibility to act. When it allows one board to make a policy

applicable to four year state colleges and not enforceable at community colleges where presidents approved it, resulting appears to be lacking.

5. Pennsylvania needs a Master Plan which is truly a plan for action and not a question of existing institutional "missions".

1. "The Search Fund for Higher Education in Pennsylvania" and "The Master Plan for Higher Education in Pennsylvania" as prepared for the State Board of Education. May 1970. 11

2. Introduction to Research by Tonya Williams published by Diagnostic Services Inc. Detroit, Michigan 1969

3. Williams in Higher Education. Pennsylvania A. Williams Company-Book 1971

4. Recommendations from the Ad-Hoc Study Committee held in Harrisburg, Virginia (October 3-4, 1971)

5. Conference proceedings of the Mid-state Committee for Affirmative and Innovative meeting at Drilling Springfield, Va. October 27,28 1970

6. "An Affirmative Model for Pennsylvania" presented to Penny Murphy Chief Division of Per Year Programs Department of Education Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Additional Handbook) 1971

7. "Implementation of Continuous Planning and Modification of Post-secondary Education Within the Michigan Department of Education" Lansing, Michigan August 1971
Date added to source

8. "An Analysis of Pennsylvania University Collegiate Student Enrollment" again Multiple Pennsylvania's Department of Of Education, Harrisburg, Pa. May 1970 Date added to source

Appendix C

[illegible]

The Pennsylvania Department of Education hereby suggests a policy to be followed by each state college in Pennsylvania for accepting transfer students who are holders of an associate degree given by a publicly supported two-year college in Pennsylvania.

This policy requires only experience implicit in the terms that the Higher Education Act creating state educational opportunity for all Pennsylvania citizens without party through an interconnected system of all publicly supported institutions of higher education.

A publicly supported institution of higher education in Pennsylvania is difficult to draw an appropriate legislative distinction describing an agreed appropriate. Even a government agency in support of the governing budget.

[illegible]

1. Every acceptance of an associate degree demonstrates a student's motivation to complete a baccalaureate degree, public laws for admission to state colleges should be given to applicants who have completed such degrees.

2. A transfer student who has only held a two-year degree should normally expect to complete a baccalaureate program in two additional years. In certain specialized programs of the governing institutions become, a longer period may be necessary for majors in those programs.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]